

a Ulysses or The Sound of the Fury  
he can be confident with any book that he encounters.

Moby Dick was the last straw though.  
She ploughed through it all right,  
and she still reads lots of books,  
but she won't touch anything I recommend.  
I have to pretend I've never heard of the Bröntes  
or Jane Austen,  
lest they be consigned to that Index  
at the head of which sits Queequeg.

Well, what do I know about whales anyway.  
Nothing.  
My whale poem will have to be imaginative as hell.  
Mauve whales, whales that speak French,  
whales that personify Satan or Gore Vidal.  
The Surrealistic Whale of Salvador Locklin.  
Only Fellini will be qualified to make  
an art-film of my whale poem.  
It will employ discarded footage  
from all the films that Gregory Peck has ever made,  
because he's always seemed to have a harpoon up his ass.

Both book and film will out-dull Moby Dick.

## GORE

I took my kids, one nine, the other six,  
to the bullfights yesterday.  
They loved them.  
They didn't cry or look away or cover their eyes.  
They wanted to see everything  
and they were especially pleased  
that there was more going on  
than at the baseball game we'd attended the night before.

In the car on the way  
I'd given them a little Death-in-the-Afternoon précis,  
so they wouldn't make the mistake of seeing it  
as man against bull.  
It didn't take them many bulls to realize  
how difficult it is to bring it all off right,  
what with the variables of wind and sun  
and the jumping and hooking of the bull  
and the impatience of the crowd.  
Not a single ear was cut all day --  
atrocious killing spoiled a couple of outstanding faenas.

The kids seemed to understand the role of the picadors better than many of the fans, how it is necessary to lower the head of the bull without, however, bleeding the animal into a stupor. They rooted for the bull when it was right to root for him, against the horses, for instance, and the fat-clown banderilleros.

Afterwards they wanted to know when we could go again. I hope it will be soon. I hope they will go on, with or without me, to Mexico City and Pamplona and Madrid. I hope they will come to associate the bullfights, as I have, with good women and great friends. I think of Vince Prestianni and I at our very first bullfight in Nogales cursed with the rain but blessed with Carlos Arruza. I think of Koertge and I driving from Tucson to Juarez and back to see Jaime Bravo, Jaime Rangel, and the Numero Uno of that season, Paco Camino, and so tired by morning that we were hallucinating on fatigue alone. I hope they will love Hemingway.

No, they didn't mind the snorting and the gore, the snapping-to-attention of the bull as his spine was severed, but, on a gentler note,

my son, insecure as to whether he enjoys the full affection of his older sibling, asked at one point:  
"When the bull dies, is his sister sad?"

#### PRONOUNCING BORGES

Everybody asks me what I think of him.

First thing first.

I don't intend to read a word until I have perfected the pronunciation of his name.